

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 18, 1962

### **Watercolors Of Old California**

Mrs. George Applegarth of San Francisco and Carmel has presented to the Monterey History and Art Assn. a very charming gift in memory of her mother, Mrs. Laura Bride Powers, first curator of the Old Custom House in Monterey, whose dream came true when the Monterey History and Art Assn., Ltd. became a reality and was incorporated by the laws of the State of California in December 1931.

The gift from Mrs. Applegarth is titled "Old California," being reproductions of original watercolors painted by Rowena Meeks Abdy, with a foreword by Gottardo Piazzoni, one of California's early painters, and both former residents of the Peninsula.

"Old California" was printed in 1924 by John Henry Nash in San Francisco, with an introduction and descriptive text by the late H. Bennett Abdy F. Am. G.S., the husband of Rowena Meeks Abdy.

The late Mr. and Mrs. Abdy bought the Sherman Wolf home on Eldorado street and lived there for a number of years. Later they spent some time in San Juan Bautista where Mrs. Abdy did a great deal of sketching and painting, as well as in Monterey. They also traveled much in Europe and once in 1917 made a voyage by steamboat 1,000 miles up the Ohio River to Pittsburgh, with the late Armin Hansen, also a Monterey artist and neighbor, as their traveling companion. That trip provided Mr. Abdy with the material for his book: "On the Ohio."

In the foreword, Gottardo Piazzoni, who once lived on a ranch up the Carmel Valley and was a distinguished artist, wrote: "The finding of an artist is like the finding of a jewel, a flower, any flower. Yes, it is a pleasure to find an artist: a real joy - like that of the traveler in finding an oasis in the desert. Artists, like flowers, grow in the most remote places of the earth, as flowers grow in the mountains, in the plains, among the rocks and in the sands.

"So artists grow where people grow, among all peoples, among those whom we call savages, as well as the civilized and, like the flowers, they are made to grow by that will of nature to help the traveler on toward his Maker. So out here in this land we call California, artists also grow and live and work, pioneering perhaps, but

with their eyes turned toward that light which never fails. They are a family of artists, a group of toilers with faith as their guiding light. To this family belongs Rowena Meeks Abdy, who has from the beginning set to work with love and reverence."

There are 10 reproductions of original watercolors of Rowena Meeks Abdy in this book, 400 copies of which were printed for Mrs. Abdy by John Henry Nash from plates etched by Howard J. Griffith, of San Francisco. The History and Art Assn. copy is No. 183. The book is dedicated to Henry E. Huntington, LLD, of San Marino, Calif., in grateful recognition of his wise and constructive, expenditures of time and money for the enrichment of art and letters in California. By his magnificent collection and artistic housing of priceless works of art and handicrafts he has placed this and future generations of Californians under a lasting but loving obligation. Signed: Rowena Meeks Abdy, San Francisco, September 1924.

Among the watercolors reproduced are: "From' a Hilltop in San Francisco," "The North Tower of Mission Santa Barbara," "Homes and Gardens of Italian Fishermen in San Francisco," "View From Twin Peaks," "Main Street" San Juan Bautista; "The Casa of the Commandant," the Castro Adobe, San Juan; "The Garden of the Apostles" at San Juan Mission; "An Old Waterside Lane Along San Francisco Bay," "Mission of San Juan Capistrano," and "On the Coast Near Monterey."

The latter picture is of the James' home at the Highlands, which is described thusly: "A dream-like bit of Spanish architecture."